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1988 is just beginning and state of the art political sophistication has yet to fully arrive in our community. Perhaps it never will because our community is complex and far-reaching. Weaving one's way through the lesbian/gay/bisexual world of politics is at times like a never ending maze and more often like walking through a mine field. There is even little time for reflection as we fight battles against us and battles between ourselves. It sometimes seems just so much easier to sit at home and determine which of my five or six remote controls belongs to which electronic product.

January is barely over and significant actions have already begun. A white lesbian is running for a state assembly seat; a black drag queen is denied access to running for empress; the three democratic clubs are attempting to facilitate a major unity statement; major civil disobedience activity has begun at the AIDS/ARC vigil; La Rouché II will be on the ballot and for the first time in nine years, San Francisco has a new mayor whose honeymoon period seems to have lasted only a half day.

Many unforeseen tragedies, highlights, controversies and excitements will be coming our way in 1988. And as Lily Tomlin searches for signs of intelligent life in the universe; I hope there will be signs of intelligent life in our community to lead us through the year and beyond.

I specifically think of signs of intelligent life in our community because of the recent barring of black drag queen Deana Jones from running for empress. The barring of Deana Jones was particularly ironic because next year will be the 20th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion where Puerto Rican drag queens have been credited as throwing the first stones as it were. The "leadership" of these non-white drag queens essentially became the catalyst for our present day lesbian/gay/bisexual freedom movement. I have to wonder if this is San Francisco 1988 or Selma, Alabama 1968. Sadly it sometimes appears that our community needs it's very own constitution and bill of rights by which to govern and protect ourselves.

As we move forward with the 1988 political agenda, we need to include serious planning to honor the 20th anniversary of Stonewall. The special anniversary provides us with an excellent opportunity to review and reassess our political strategies since 1969.

Beyond the celebratory events and Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day, I think an unusual but potentially exciting way to accomplish such reflection is to hold a major three to four day summit of all Bay Area lesbian/gay/bisexual political groups, organizations and individuals. The logistics of such an event cause me to cringe but our community is fortunate to have a number of consummate organizers of major events and conferences.

Our political community is an enormous political map. Some of us make stops at only a few destinations while others stop at many destinations by virtue of race, gender, class or political identification. One thing remains clear with me as I move through my various political worlds is that there are vast distances in between, yet they are all part of our community.

Some individuals are leaders in one part of the community and are virtually unknown and invisible in others. For example, some lesbians and gay men of color may not know who Roberta Achtenberg is, or even care about her candidacy because their perception of her is as representing the white lesbian/gay elite leadership, or white lesbian feminists may not care that Deana Jones was barred from running for empress because they consider drag queens as degrading women. And so our much lauded diversity goes and political lessons lost. I use these examples only to illustrate a few of the very real political dimensions which exist within our community.

A major political summit would certainly not eradicate our conflicts, animosities or divisions but could embolden us to take stronger steps in acknowledging and accepting that the lesbian/gay/bisexual political movement is broader than three democratic clubs.

Our internal political processes and knowledge need to be seriously examined if after almost two decades of an intense lesbian/gay movement, racism and sexism are so close to the surface. Our leadership pool consists of very few lesbians and gay men of color who are "accepted" and few white lesbians who are truly respected throughout the community.

I see the summit, in particular, addressing the ethics and principles by which we do our political work. It is this area probably more than any other which has harmed our movement. Some leaders make snobbery an art and others have not learned that personal ambition doesn't mean having to crush your own people while advancing the movement.

I envision the summit itself, if thoughtfully and carefully planned, as vigorous, challenging, not without controversy or lively debate and providing a rare opportunity to meet each other in strait forward political discourse. The gamut of how we express our political experiences from the last two decades can run from workshops, forums, discussions papers, plenaries, theatre, poetry, video, caucuses and of course a few potlucks.

The summit could begin to erode the elements of mistrust and suspicion which often permeates our political process. Our political truths, lies and rumors could be demystified and at the end of the summit we could burn in effigy wooden words spelling politically correct and then go forward into the next 20 years, stronger, smarter with a keen sense of who our political community is. We can better prepare our strategies with self-knowledge and most importantly if the summit was successful, we could move into the next 20 years with less fear and hatred of one another.

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